

S-383
John W. Crisfield House
Princess Anne
private

c. 1852 and earlier

The John W. Crisfield house, currently known as "Somerset House", is a significant town dwelling for many reasons. The main house is one of an important collection of gable front houses built in Princess Anne during the first half of the nineteenth century. However, the Crisfield house was planned with a side hall, double-pile arrangement which differed from the transverse hall tradition established by the Teackle Mansion. Secondly, the mid eighteenth-century rear section, formerly the Cheney house, is one of three Princess Anne dwellings that date from the colonial period. The fully paneled partition wall and the exposed framing members are the two most significant early features. Lastly, the main block was financed by John Woodland Crisfield. Prominent among county attorneys, Crisfield encouraged the spur line of the Eastern Shore railroad to connect Somers' Cove.

In spite of its setting among planned gardens, brick walks, and old magnolias, the Crisfield house has had a rather confusing history that has included at least three major building periods, followed in 1929 by a separation and relocation of the main house to its present site facing Washington Street.

The earliest portion of the Crisfield house is the present dining room, a mid eighteenth century frame structure thought to have been the dwelling of Andrew Francis Cheney, who purchased Lot 30 in June of 1755

from Thomas Jones of Worcester County for £45. Three years later Andrew Cheney bought the adjacent Lot 25 from Benjamin Hobbs for, "twenty shillings sterling and two shillings and six pence." Also documented in the 1758 transfer is the statement, "the lott situate in Princess Anne Town being the lott next adjoining the lott whereon the said Cheney now lives..." Evidently, the Cheney house was moved to the adjacent Lot 25 since Lot 30 was sold to Lambert Hyland for five shillings. In 1798, Doctor Francis Cheney, son of Andrew Cheney, was assessed for Lot 25 which had, "1 Dwelling House, 30 by 24, wood, one story."

A half-century later, John Woodland Crisfield purchased Lot 30 from William W. Johnston in December of 1851, and Crisfield proceeded to finance the construction of a finely crafted two-and-a-half story frame house fronting Main Street. The Honorable John W. Crisfield occupied the house until his bankruptcy in 1876, when the property was finally sold to Anna L. and William L. Haines.

Crisfield retired to his farm, "Edge Hill." It was probably during the ownership of the Haineses, which stretched from 1876 to 1909, that the bracketed addition was attached. In 1909, S. Frank Dashiell purchased the property from Anna L. Haines, and twenty years later the Dashiells relocated the main section of the house on the lot behind the bracketed addition. It was at this time that the old Cheney house, by now converted to a storage building, was moved up to the newly relocated main house and used as a dining room. William T. Fehsenfeld purchased the main house from the Dashiell eatate in 1972 and proceeded through an extensive renovation.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. S-383

Magi No. 2003835404

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic John W. Crisfield House

and/or common Somerset House

2. Location

street & number Washington Street ☐ not for publicationcity, town Princess Anne ☐ vicinity of ☐ congressional district Firststate Maryland ☐ county Somerset

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name William T. Fehsenfeld

street & number 22 E. Washington Street telephone no.:

city, town Princess Anne state and zip code MD. 21853

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Somerset County Courthouse folio

city, town Princess Anne state MD. 21853

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. S-383

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			1929

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The John W. Crisfield house (also known as Somerset House) stands at 22 East Washington Street in the center of Princess Anne, Somerset County, Maryland. The two-story, three-bay, side hall, double-pile house currently faces south with the principal gable oriented on an east/west axis.

The Crisfield house, a combination frame dwelling that consists of a mid nineteenth-century main house and a mid eighteenth-century rear section currently used as a dining room, has had a complex history of construction and change. Originally, the Crisfield house stood on the northeast corner of Somerset Avenue and East Washington Street. During the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, a two-story bracketed addition was attached to the back of the main block. However, in 1929 the two sections were separated, and the main house was moved behind the bracketed addition facing Washington Street. Shortly after the move, the mid eighteenth-century Cheney house was moved up to the main house. The late nineteenth-century dwelling was converted to a separate dwelling.

Supported by a masonry foundation, the two-story side hall house is clad in cypress weatherboards and covered with a steeply pitched wood shingle roof. The former front of the house is three bays across with a pedimented entrance in the north bay and two six-over-six sash windows flanked by louvered shutters fill the two adjacent bays to the south. The Federal period door surround has fluted pilasters, a modillioned pediment, and an arched fanlight. The muntins are set in a decorative radiating pattern. However, the Federal door frame and nine-panel door were added to this house after removal from East Glen, built in 1803 for Matthias Jones. The second floor is lighted by three evenly spaced six-over-six sash windows, and the gabled pediment is pierced by an arched Palladian style window. In contrast to the rest of the house, the pediment is covered with flush boards.

The south elevation is a symmetrical elevation with two six-over-six sash windows on each floor, and two gabled dormers with six-over-six sash windows light the finished attic. Rising from the north slope of the roof is a pair of brick chimneys.

The north side of the main block is partially covered by the single-story mid eighteenth-century Cheney house, and a glassed-in back porch. The Cheney house is two bays across and one room deep. The two-room first floor is lighted by six-over-six sash windows flanked by louvered shutters.

The east side of the composite dwelling is finished in a similar manner with six-over-six sash windows lighting the first and second floors. A single six-over-six sash window lights the attic, and the gable end is finished with a molded bargeboard.

The interior of the main house has been partially reworked with the addition of reproduction woodwork and reused mantels. The stair, however, is the most significant feature of the main block with its turned newel post, tiger maple balusters and continuous handrail which rises to the third floor. The dining room retains an original fully paneled partition wall which divided the two-room eighteenth-century house. In addition the principal framing members are still exposed.

8. Significance

Survey No. S-383

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The John W. Crisfield house is a significant Princess Anne dwelling for several reasons. The main house is one of an important collection of gable front houses built in Princess Anne during the first half of the nineteenth century; however, its side hall double pile plan differs with the transverse or cross hall plan of the other examples. In addition the mid eighteenth century Cheney house is one of three Princess Anne dwellings that date from the colonial period. The fully paneled partition wall and the exposed framing members are the two most significant features. Furthermore, this house was built as the town house of John Woodland Crisfield, one of the most prominent attorneys of his day, who led the movement to join Somers' Cove with the main line of the Eastern Shore Railroad.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

In spite of its setting among planned gardens, brick walks, and old magnolias, the Somerset House has had a rather confusing history that has included at least three major construction periods, followed in 1929 by a separation and relocation of the main house to its present site facing Washington Street.

The earliest portion of Somerset House is the present dining room, a mid eighteenth-century frame structure that is thought to have been the dwelling of Andrew Francis Cheney, who purchased Lot 30 in June of 1755 from Thomas Jones of Worcester County for L 45. Three years later Andrew Cheney bought the adjacent Lot 25 from Benjamin Hobbs for, "twenty shillings sterling and two shillings and six pence;" the "lott situate in Princess Anne Town being the lott next adjoining the lott whereon the said Cheney now lives..." Evidently, the Cheney house was moved to the adjacent Lot 25 at some point and Lot 30 was sold to Lambert Hyland for five shillings. In 1798 Doctor Francis Cheney, son of Andrew Cheney, was assessed for Lot 25 which had, "1 Dwelling House, 30 by 24, wood, one story."

A half-century later, John Woodland Crisfield purchased Lot 30 from William W. Johnston in December of 1851, and Crisfield proceeded to finance the construction of a finely crafted two-story frame house fronting Main Street. The Honorable John W. Crisfield was not only a prominent attorney in his day, but he also advanced the idea of a railroad link to Somers Cove, later renamed Crisfield. John W. Crisfield occupied the Main Street house until his bankruptcy in 1876, when the property was finally sold to Anna L. and William L. Haines.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. S-383

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification _____

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Touart - Architectural Historian

organization Somerset County Historical Trust

date 4/23/86

street & number 424 N. Somerset Avenue

telephone 651-0077

city or town Princess Anne

state MD. 21853

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

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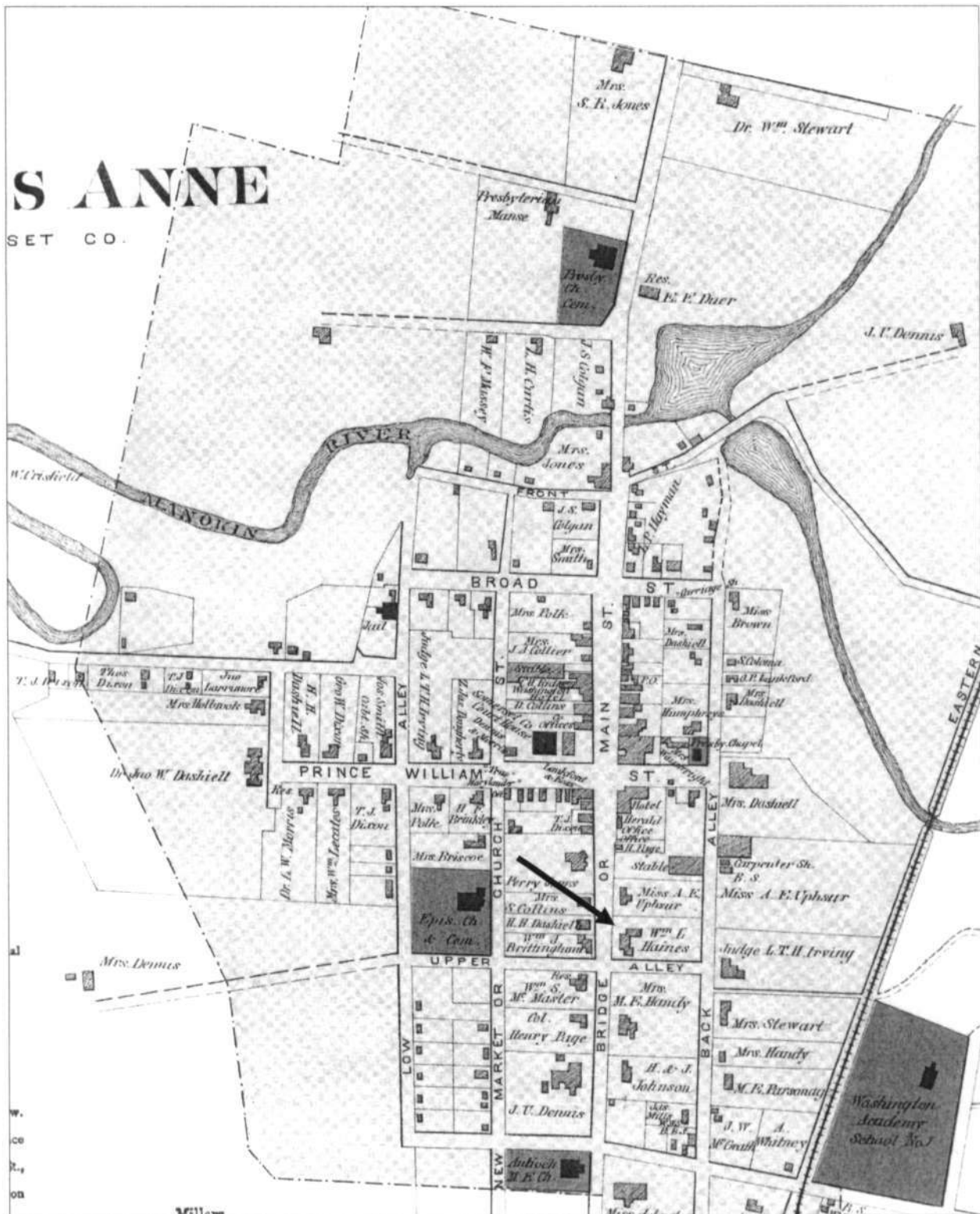
S-383

John W. Crisfield House (Somerst House)

30556 Washington Street, Princess Anne

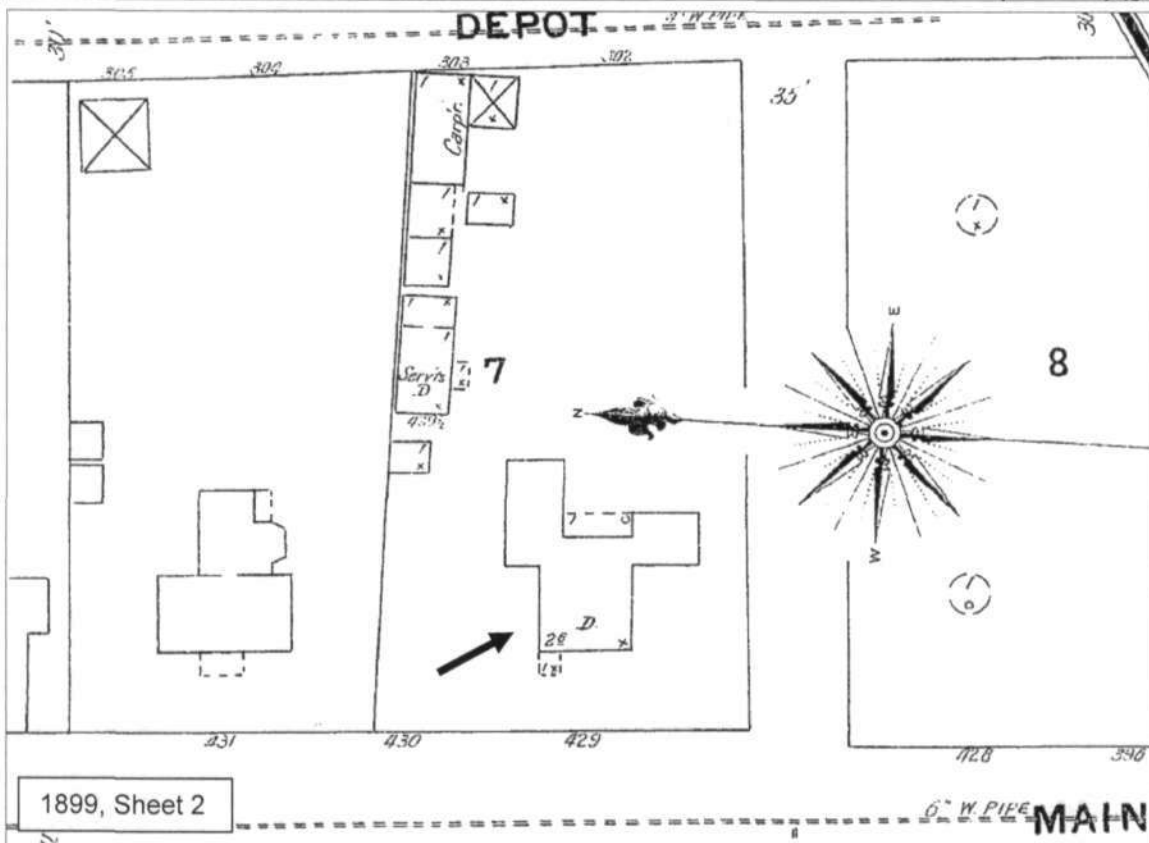
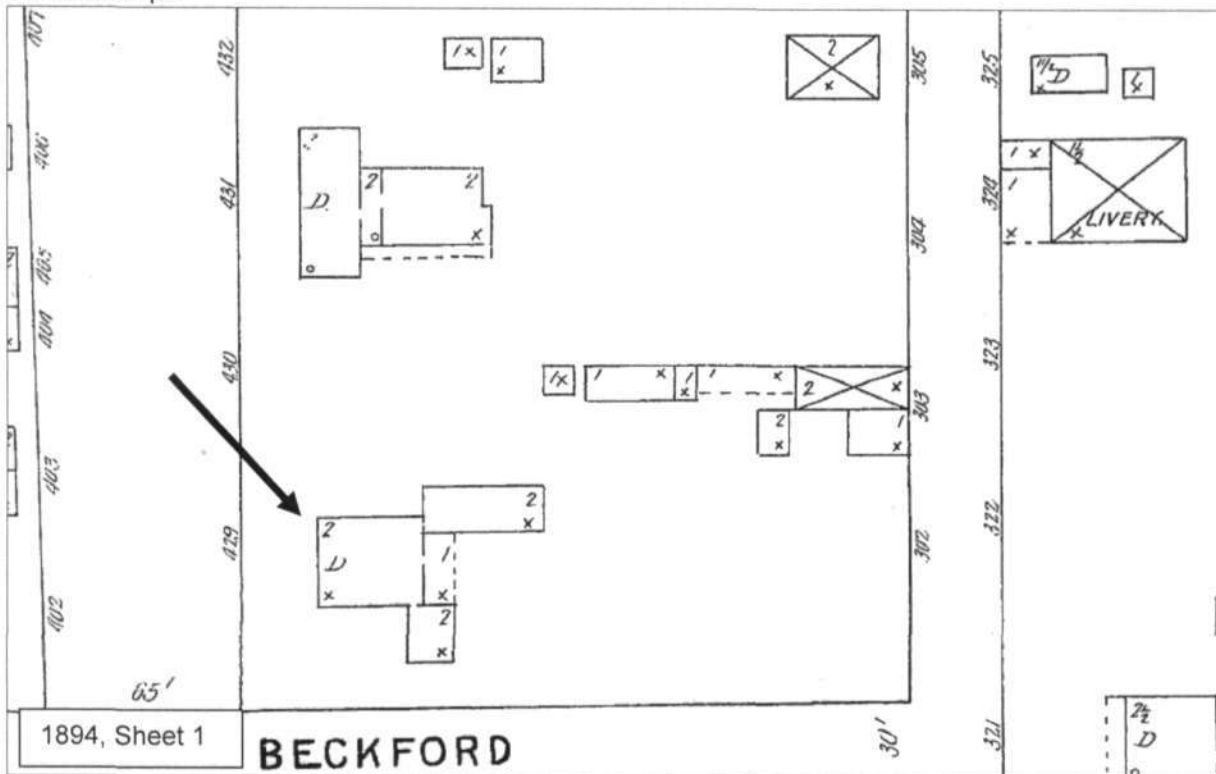
Lake, Griffing & Stevenson (1877) Atlas of Wicomico, Worcester, & Somerset Counties, Maryland.

Princess Anne detail



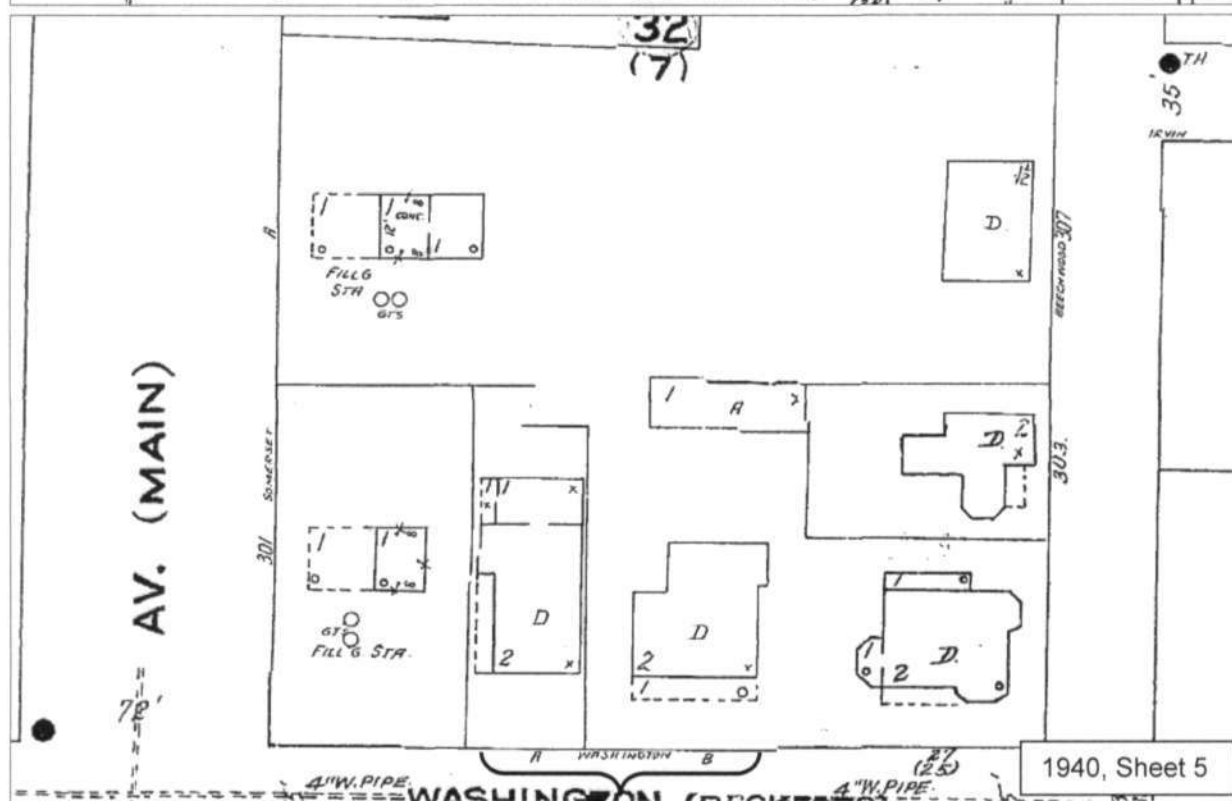
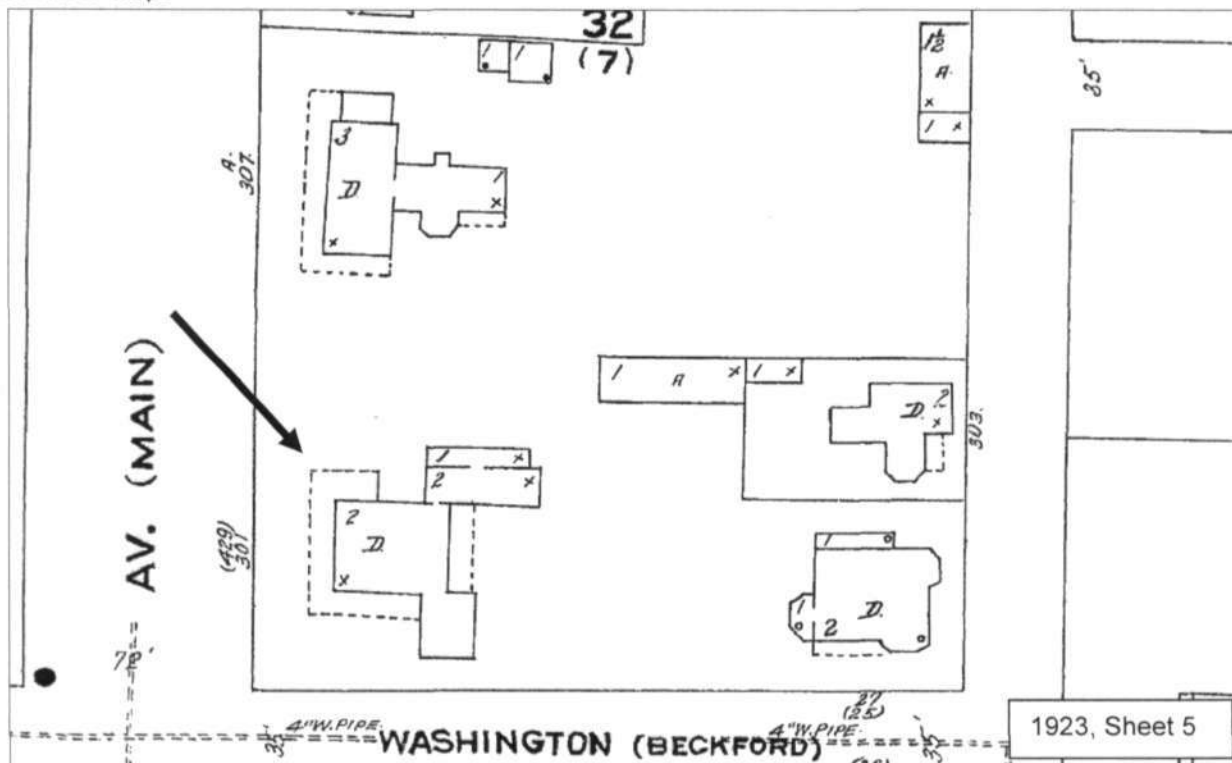
S-383

John W. Crisfield House (Somerset House)
30556 Washington Street, Princess Anne
Sanborn Maps



S-383

John W. Crisfield House (Somerset House)
30556 Washington Street, Princess Anne
Sanborn Maps



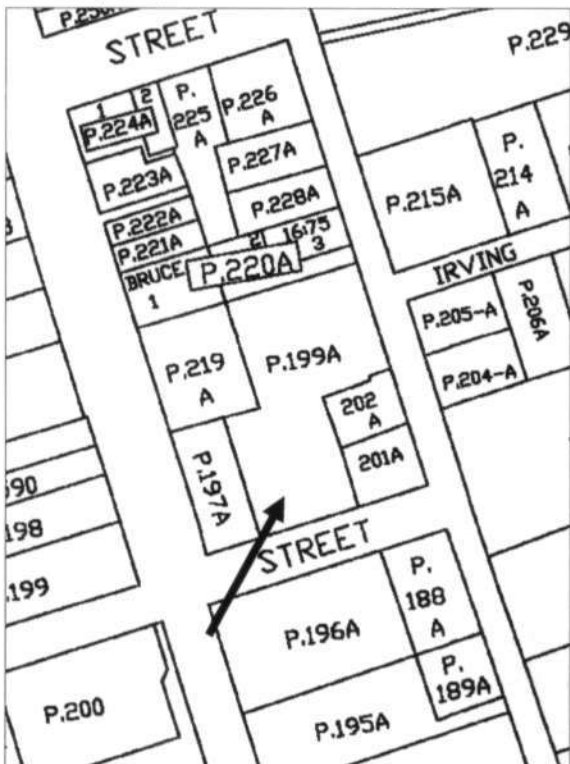
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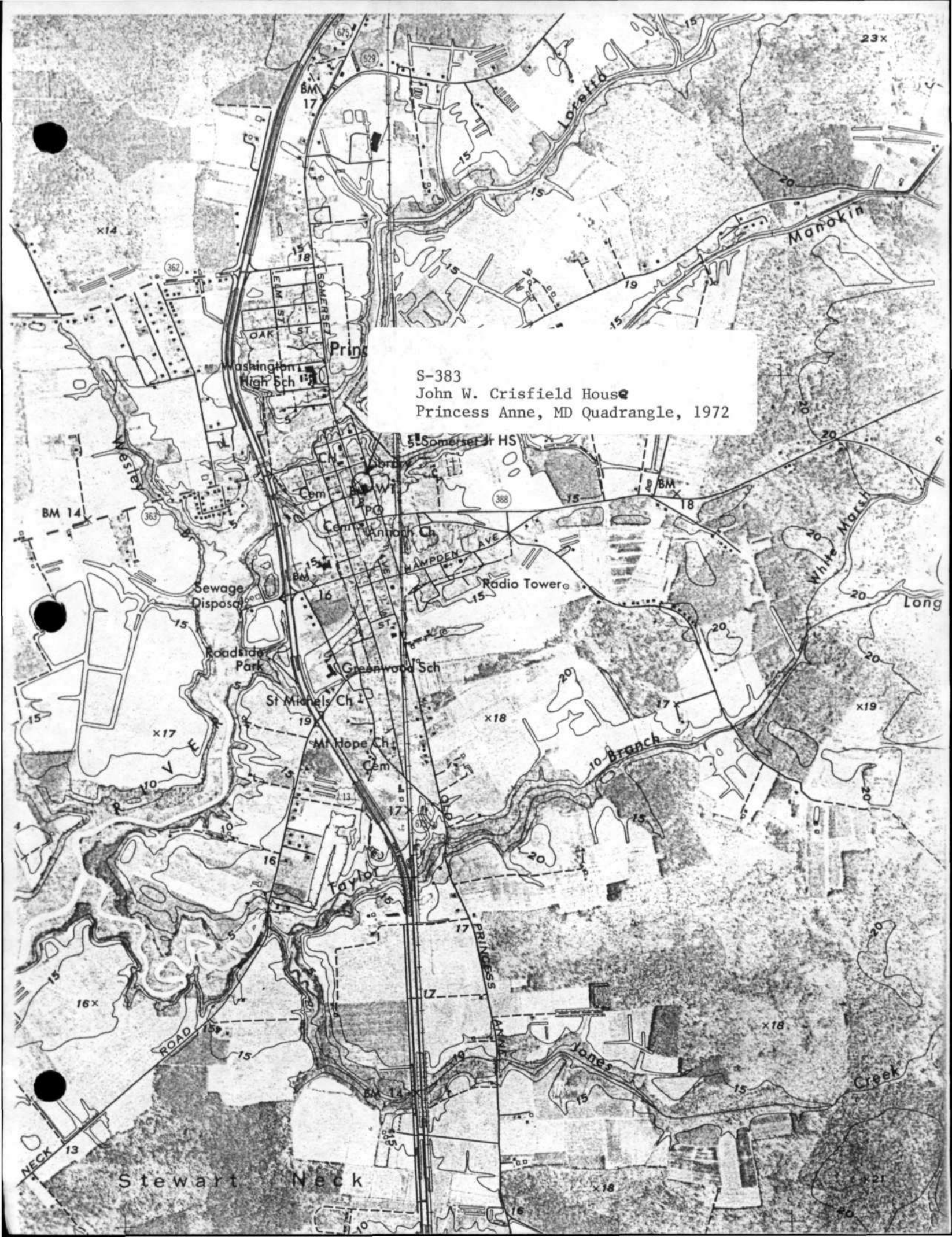
John W. Crisfield House (Somerset House)
30556 Washington Street, Princess Anne
Princess Anne quad 1972



Tax Map 202, P. 199A

National Web Map Service 6" Orthophoto Map, c. 2010





S-383

John W. Crisfield House

Princess Anne, MD Quadrangle, 1972



John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD

West elevation

4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer

Neg./MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD

South elevation

4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer

Neg./MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House

S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD

Garden

4/84, Paul Touart, Photographer

Neg./ MD Hist. Trust



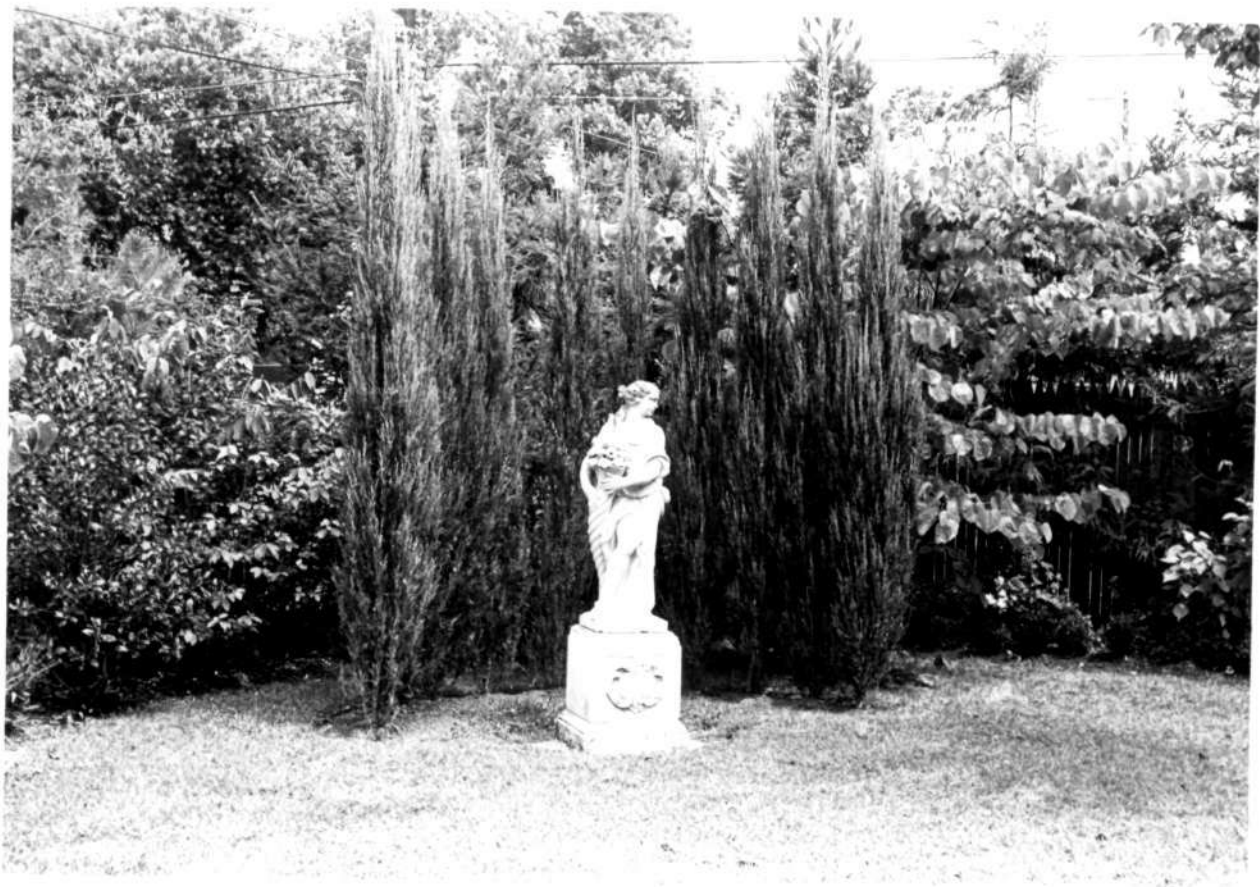
John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD
Garden

4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./ MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House S-383
Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD
Garden
4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./MD Hist/ Trust



John W. Crisfield House
Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD
Garden
4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./ MD Hist. Trust

S-383



John W. Crisfield House S-383
Princess Anne, Somerset Co. Md.
Garden Gate
10/85, Paul Touart, Photographer *
Neg/Md. Historical Trust



John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD

Garden

4/85, Paul Touart, Produce

Neg./MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD
Garden

4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House S-383
Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD
Garden
4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
Neg./ MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House S-383
Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD
Garden
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Neg./MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House

S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD

Garden Building

4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer

Neg./MD Hist. Trust



John W. Crisfield House S-383
Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD
South elevation
4/85, Paul Touart, Photographer
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John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD

Front Door

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John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co., MD

Front door

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John W. Crisfield House S-383

Princess Anne, Somerset Co. MD

Entrance

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